

BHHC-1-1-30

Handley Farm

Family dairy looks to the future

The Handley family, who run a dairy south of Belen, have been Farm Bureau members for 20 years, ever since moving to New Mexico from Pennsylvania.

They have been located on their present farm for some five years after having operated at Bosque farms previous to that.

Ralph and his sons David, Richard and Douglas milk some 170 plus cows in their herd and market their milk through Associated Milk Producers Inc. (AMPI).

During the last year the Handley's said the milk business has improved greatly. "The future looks better than it did two years ago," said David

**Reprinted from December issue
of New Mexico Farm and Ranch**

"Population increases should keep demand up and if the government doesn't ship commodities into lower prices as they have in the past we should be in good shape," Ralph said.

The American farmer can produce any product cheaper because he is the most efficient in the world. But, we can't compete against foreign products when they are subsidized by their governments," David said.

Richard blamed much of the problem of the industry a few years ago on the investigation of AMPI political campaign practices. "People forgot that the dairyman wasn't the one making the large donations," he said adding as a result politicians were afraid to act on anything that looked like it might help the dairy industry.

He continued the unstableness of the nation's economy also played havoc with the milk industry a few years back and that played an important role in some of the problems the industry had. "Co-ops are important to consumers and have been the salvation of the dairyman in this country," Richard said.

Regarding the health aspects of milk Ralph said "You can't fool the public because the quality of our milk has greatly improved over the years."

He continued that although milk has come under attack by some medical people homemakers know more than ever the importance of dairy products in the daily diet of their people. "People will always eat and drink our dairy products," he said adding the news media is starting to report on medical testimony that contradicts earlier detrimental reports on milk.

The Handleys are firm believers in the new farming and dairy equipment that is available today.

"The operation is more efficient with this equipment and we better utilize our labor resources better," said Ralph who added in September a group of dairymen from Mexico visited their operation and said on a similar dairy in Mexico 10-12 men would be used to operate it compared to the 4 members of the Handley family.

Ralph and David pretty much run the business. They buy roughage in the field and harvest it themselves and they buy all of their grain.

Recently they have been making

alfalfa roughage of their third cutting of hay. In the past that has been the poorest cutting in that area of the state and they feel this way it is better feed for their cows and they have had less losses because of the rainy season.

"We've had good production feeding it," Ralph said.

The Handley herd is Guernsey and

today that is also somewhat unique because more and more there are less Guernsey herds around.

The Handleys are optimistic about the future but optimistic with a certain amount of caution based on the premise that governmental actions have hurt the dairyman in the past and could do it again in the future.



Above from left is Ralph Handley and his sons David, Richard and Douglas who operate a dairy farm south of Belen. Below is part of the Guernsey herd at the Handley farm.



